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LE SPLEEN DE POUGHKEEPSIE

JOSHUA HARMON

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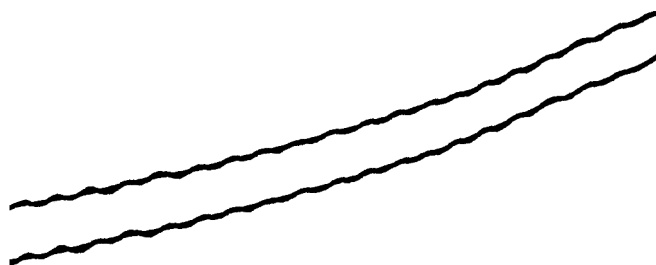
Contents

Two Pastorals	I
[The automatic garage-door opener]	3
[To Shop-Vac the sidestreet]	4
The Poughkeepsiad	5
Tableaux Poughkeepsiens	13
[I lived in one place]	15
[Asbestos in carpet glue...]	16
[A pole saw can reach far enough...]	17
[Cusp of July and August:]	18
[Thin ribbons of cloud and half a ruinous moon]	19
[Broken glass in the shape of]	20
[The undercity rivers beneath cast]	22
[Does it help that the evening no]	23
[Crow-scatter engraves evening, wings beating]	24
[In a geography of service drives and sumac]	25
[Deer cross against the lights]	26
[An inquiry into more forlorn subjects...]	27
[The provisional, the mostly blank...]	28
[The disheartened public]	29
[The quiet streets of meth]	30
[Can new tedium distract one]	31
[Bare-branched maples, brush]	32
[Not one, but dozens...]	33
[To build a life from happy accidents]	34
[Slice of hillside]	35
[We shoot everything you want to]	36
[Still and slate-dark by four-thirty]	37
[I slept on a varnished...]	38
[To be freed from the burden]	39

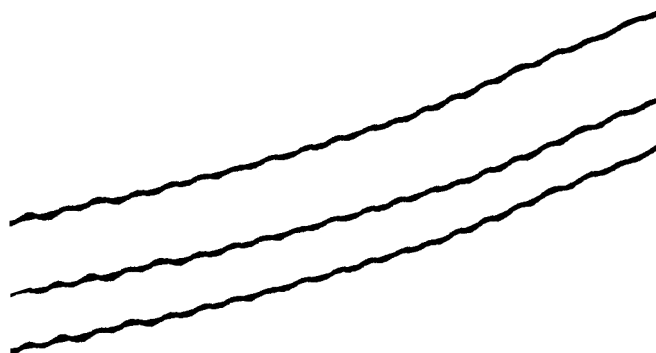
[The house shudders in wind]	40
[Milkweed and broken sink,]	41
[Only the immeasurable]	43
[Poor little Poughkeepsie,]	44
[What are the pitfalls...]	46
[The quivering powerlines could be...]	47
[I'm trying to whittle this skyline...]	48
[The view from basement]	49
[Seed-flecked snow]	50
[It's cinematic, the blank billboard...]	52
[The iciest particulars: I was...]	53
[A parking]	54
[As blackened snow retreats...]	55
[The perilous optic, 3 AM...]	56
[O springtime foliage!]	57
[The elegance of an only focus, a trance]	58
[Children wire stuffed]	59
[Amid the last sentences of rusting]	60
[The greatest poverty is not to live]	61
[The absent tenant's electricity...]	62
 Hooker Avenue Serenade	 63
 Recessive Variations	 69
 For the Poughkeepsie Dead	 77
 Two Pastorals (II)	 85
[White steeple, gold]	87
[Under over]	88
 L'Envoi	 89
 Notes	 93

J'omets la description du taudis...

—Charles Baudelaire,
Le Spleen de Paris



TWO PASTORALS



The automatic garage-door opener
lifts on a prospect of Poughkeepsie:
row of parked cars along curb, man
leaf-blowing each falling leaf,
sumac growing beneath the overpass:
if you're not part of the problem,
you're part of the lengthening
tragedy: we see all the others
slipped into the bright shapes of endeavor,
imprints snow slowly fills, but the stray
detours and workarounds of the secret
city inside the more obvious one
elude our plundered adornments
and church-bell quarter-hours:
on the outskirts of the absurd
attention to the material life,
of course the factories are empty
and the train line overgrown,
and the everyday fills the ravine
beside the highway: the passive voice
speaks on our winds and in the humming
of our truck tires, the delicacy
of Saturday-night videophoning
and bonfires across the valley
in woods past their peak

To Shop-Vac the sidestreet
of one's grass clippings
is to say I am dispossessed
of a deeper fortitude
with which I might lose
track of the beam or the bank
supporting the idea
of deliverance from myself
and other, similar errors:
later, the cruiser spotlights
semi-suburban houses,
those dark alleys emptied
but for early woodsmoke and diesel
fumes paid on or before
this inescapable duty resolved
shortfalls in neighborliness,
and the engine running all night
inside a garage does not kill
the murderous rage you feel:
the working life peaces out
and declares its independence